

## **ABSTRACT**

**DISSERTATION/THESIS/RESEARCH PAPER/CREATIVE PROJECT:**  
Examining Experiences of Weight-Related Oppression in a Bariatric Sample: A Qualitative Exploration

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While the concept of oppression has been studied in the context of many social or cultural identity variables (e.g., race, gender, sexual orientation), body size and weight are just beginning to be considered as additional multicultural or diversity factors that may lead to experiences of oppression or privilege. Previous research has examined weight bias, fat-phobia, obesity stigma, and related concepts, but mostly using quantitative methods and often only in very specific realms (e.g., employment discrimination based on weight/body size). The purpose of the current study was to examine the subjective experiences of weight-related oppression of individuals who are, or have been, of large body size. A sample of 20 adults (16 women and 4 men) who have, or will, undergo bariatric weight loss surgery were interviewed about their experiences of weight or body size-related oppression, and their responses qualitatively analyzed using a grounded theory approach. Semi-structured interviews were conducted and included questions or prompts regarding participants' personal experiences of weight-based discrimination, perceived prejudice, stigma, as well as other concepts related to oppression (or conversely, privilege). Four constructs emerged from 14 themes

in the data. The overarching constructs included a) weight-related oppression occurs at multiple levels, b) weight-related oppression occurs in multiple areas of participants' lives, c) belief and attitudes about weight and body size, and d) reactions to oppression. The 14 themes were comprised of 58 ideas that were relevant for this topic and repeated both within and across the participants. Clinical implications for medical and mental health providers, limitations of the current study, and future research directions are also addressed and discussed.